DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 280 EC 102 216

TITLE	The Parent Program.
INSTITUTION	Austin Independent School District, Tex.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	36p.; For related information, see EC 102 210 - EC 102 221
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Early Childhood Education; *Handicapped Children; Needs Assessment; *Parent Counseling; *Parent Education; Parents; Parent School Relationship; Parent Workshops; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	*Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program

ABSTRACT

The parent component of the Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program is described. Goals of the program are seen to include providing parents with emotional support, knowledge, and skill development. Intake, needs assessment, counseling, home visits, parent conferences, and training workshops for parents are considered. Nearly half of the document is composed of eight appendixes, including a parent handbook, a needs assessment for parents, and a parent contact form. (CL)

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ED144280

The Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program

THE PARENT PROGRAM

Outreach Project
Austin Early Childhood Special Education
Austin Independent School District

Fall, 1976

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Overview of Program

Since the resources of the home may well be the deciding factor in determining how well the Austin Early Childhood Special Education (AECSE) Program succeeds in optimizing a child's development, plans for parent involvement have been essential since the beginning of the program in 1973. The support, understanding, cooperation and participation of the parents in the child's total program holds a high priority.

All AECSE staff members are involved with parents of children in the program, but the primary responsibility for coordinating the parent program belongs to the parent coordinator. She is charged with planning and implementing activities that will involve the parents in active participation in their child's program.

The activities of the parent program are based on certain assumptions made about the parents. These assumptions are:

1. Parents are individuals and their participation in activities is determined by their individuality.
2. Parents have different needs and must have the opportunity to state their needs.
3. Parents are concerned about their child and interested in his well-being.
4. Parents want to know what happens with their child at school.
5. Parents want information and training pertaining to their child's program.

6. Parents want to participate in the school program.

7. Parents who are involved in the school program support the school in the community and foster positive public relations.

8. Parents are necessary and vital members in the team approach, and their support and cooperation is essential in assuring maximum success with the child.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives that form the basis of the parent program speak to both the affective and cognitive needs of parents of handicapped children. Three broad goal areas and accompanying objectives for the parent program are:

Emotional Support

To encourage and facilitate expression and acceptance of feelings and to reduce the isolation experienced by many parents of handicapped children.

1. The parents will talk about their feelings as they relate to accepting their handicapped child.
2. The parents will get together with other families who have children with special problems.

Knowledge

To give information necessary for parents to understand normal child growth and development and to promote awareness and utilization of services and resources available to the community.

1. The parents will learn about child development.
2. The parents will understand changes that take place in their child by learning to observe children.
3. The parents will learn about their child's problem.
4. The parents will learn about community resources.

Skill Development

To develop skills in parents to observe their child and other children, to observe positive growth, to manage problem behaviors, to extend activities of the school into the home, and to improve their skills in facilitating their child's language and conceptual development.

1. The parents will improve skills in managing behavior problems.

2. The parents will communicate and work closely with the child's teacher.

3. Parents will use the same methods and techniques at home that are being used at school.

Activities

Intake

The parent coordinator's initial contact with a family occurs when the child is registered for the AECSE Program. At that time the parent coordinator assists parents in completing forms, explains services offered through the parent program, and provides the parents with informational materials concerning the parent program and AECSE. The parent coordinator distributes the Parent Needs Form and the Parent Participation Information Form to each parent and provides parents with a copy of the Parent Handbook (see Appendix for copies of these).

Following the initial meeting the parent coordinator records and files her observations concerning parents' interest level, questions asked, willingness to participate and other relevant information. She keeps a file on the family of each child enrolled in AECSE, and maintains confidential, pertinent records regarding the family's involvement in the program.

When the parent forms are returned, the parent coordinator records the specific and general needs expressed by the parents. In some instances, the parent coordinator makes arrangements with the coordinator of community services to provide services that will meet a specific need expressed by a parent.

When all information is gathered, the parent coordinator completes a Parent Plan (see Appendix) for the parents. She formulates two objectives, one long term and one short term, based on the needs expressed by the parents, and lists appropriate activities for meeting the objectives. The parent coordinator maintains ongoing evaluation of the objectives, and when one is met, she adds a new objective and appropriate activities.

Needs Assessment

The parent coordinator developed a Parent Needs Form (see Appendix) in an effort to determine areas of parent interest and plan appropriate parent activities. The Parent Needs Form states each objective of the parent program as a parental need and lists services offered to meet each need. Parents rate each need as high or low priority, and indicate what services they feel would be helpful in meeting the need. The parent coordinator plans activities based on the needs assessment, and regularly evaluates the activities to determine their appropriateness. Most activities are offered to parents on an individual basis; however, if many parents express the same general need, the parent coordinator schedules a workshop relating to that need and contacts a consultant to conduct the workshop.

Counseling

The parent coordinator counsels parents in formal and informal sessions. These sessions may occur on the telephone, when the parents visit the program, during prearranged meetings or on a home visit. The parent coordinator lists brief contacts with parents on a Parent Contact Form (see Appendix) and records the reason for the contact. When more in-depth sessions occur, the parent coordinator completes a Confidential Parent Contact form (see Appendix), where she records confidential information and follow-up recommendations.

Most counseling sessions with parents stem from their need to talk with a professional concerning their handicapped child. The parent coordinator provides them with the opportunity to discuss their feelings, and arranges contacts with other parents who have had similar feelings. She supplies the parents with written information that may help them deal with their child, and involves the parents in their child's total program.

Occasionally, the parent coordinator refers the parents to an agency or doctor to receive additional help. If the parents are receiving private counseling, the parent coordinator does not counsel with them until they are released by the doctor or agency.

Home Visits

Home visits are made periodically by teachers and by the parent coordinator. A home visit is made by the teacher within a month after a child enters the program. This visit gives the parents an opportunity to meet the teachers and ask questions regarding the program. The teachers discuss the program with the parents and describe the child's classroom. A home visit enables teachers to observe the interaction between family members and the child and to discuss specific problems such as medication, toileting, or feeding.

A home visit policy has been established by the parent coordinator and the teachers. The suggested plan includes the following points:

- Call to arrange a time for the visit.
- Read the child's special education folder before going to the home.
- Make home visits in teams of two.
- Introduce yourself and greet the child.
- Decide in advance what information you will discuss.
- Answer parents questions and concerns as completely as possible.
- Do not discuss sensitive information with the child present.
- Record information after the visit, not during the visit.

Following the initial home visit, the teachers complete an Initial Home Visit form (see Appendix) in which they record pertinent

information. The teachers also write a report on the visit and file this report in the child's classroom folder. If any follow-up service is needed, the teachers inform the parent coordinator.

The parent coordinator makes home visits throughout the year for a variety of reasons. If follow-up services are required subsequent to the initial home visit, the parent coordinator makes a home visit to arrange these services with the parents. The parent coordinator makes a home visit to meet parents who have not come to the school, to deliver forms that need to be completed, or to take a child home if he becomes ill at school. She may also follow up on home training programs through a home visit.

Following a home visit, the parent coordinator completes a Home Visit form (see Appendix), where she records the reason for the visit, the information received, and follow-up services needed. The coordinator shares any pertinent information with the teachers, and files the form in the parents' folder.

Parent Conferences

At least two parent conferences are held each year, the first approximately six weeks after a child enters the AECSE Program and the second during the last month of school. Program guidelines describe three types of conferences: to share diagnostic information (initial), to summarize the year's progress (final), and to

discuss a particular problem or developmental area (as called by teachers or parents).

Staff members who work with a particular child are present during a parent conference. Each member shares pertinent information with those present, and the parents ask questions or offer additional information. Following the conference, a summary is written for the child's classroom folder. The parent coordinator records her attendance at the conference in the parent's folder.

Newsletter

During the first year of the AECSE Program, the parent coordinator initiated the dissemination of a monthly newsletter to parents. The newsletter provides a means for communicating with the parents, and helps keep them informed of program activities, holidays, program news, and suggestions for activities to use with a child at home.

The parent coordinator is responsible forthe contents of the newletters, and solicits contributions from parents, teachers, and support staff. Articles are written on a variety of topics: language development, summertime activities, simple recipes, games to make at home, safety precautions at Halloween, and other relevant areas. The newsletters also contain program information such as holiday schedules, notices of meetings, special program activities, or

recognition of individual parents for special services.

The newsletters are typed by the program secretary and are printed by the school district. To insure their safe delivery, they are mailed to parents each month.

Meetings

The parent coordinator plans four evening meetings and monthly morning meetings for the year. She is reponsible for arranging the time and location of the meeting, planning the topic and presenter, informing parents and staff of the meeting, and working out details such as providing babysitting services, transportation, or refreshments.

The evening meetings scheduled for the year are announced in the October newsletter. The initial evening meeting is an Open House, held early in the year. At this meeting, parents have the opportunity to meet the staff and visit their child's classroom. At subsequent evening meetings, programs are presented on various topics such as therapy services or behavior management.

The parent coordinator schedules morning meetings on a monthly basis, and plans programs that relate directly to needs expressed on the Parent Needs Form. At these meetings the parents have an opportunity to share experiences with other parents, talk to professionals concerning services available for their children, or discuss specific topics relating to handicapping conditions.

Parent Library

The parent library is housed in the AECSE Program office and is available for parents and staff. The library contains books, pamphlets, child development training programs, and filmstrips. New materials are added frequently.

The parent coordinator is responsible for maintaining the library. She orders materials, catalogues new materials, and supervises the check-out system. She advises parents and staff of new materials, and recommends materials when a need for information on a specific topic is expressed by parents or staff.

Training Workshops

Training for parents occurs both at school and at home. School training workshops are conducted at school either by the parent coordinator or by a consultant. Home training occurs on an individual basis and is supervised by a teacher or therapist.

School Training Workshops

The parent coordinator arranges training workshops at school according to the needs expressed by the parents. Although topics vary, parents frequently request training in three areas: observation skills, making materials, and teaching with items found in the home. The parent coordinator conducts those workshops, and has compiled a handbook to accompany two of them.

In the workshop on observation skills parents learn to observe children, including their own child, using specific skills. A handbook, "Observation Training for Parents", guides their observations.

In another session the parents make teaching materials to use at home or school. A guide for this session is a manual entitled "Inexpensive and Easily made Instructional Materials---A Training Manual for Teachers and Parents for Working with Preschool Children." This manual is listed in the Parenting Materials Information Center, Early Childhood Division, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 211 E. 7th St., Austin, Texas.

A workshop on teaching with materials found in the home involves the parents in devising activities for children using common objects.

Home Training

Home training occurs on an individual basis and is prescribed by a teacher or therapist. Home training programs vary according to a child's needs.

When a teacher or therapist prescribes a home training program, she invites the parents to observe her working with their child on a specified task. The teacher or therapist writes a home training plan for the parents and supervises them as they work with the child on the task. Home training activities are monitored weekly.

Appendix

The Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program

Parent Handbook

Philosophy

It is our belief that the public schools are committed to the purpose of serving the needs of the individual attending school and the society which supports the school. This includes all children regardless of their variance in abilities. In accepting this commitment the Austin Early Childhood Staff has established four major goals based upon the total physical, mental, and social-emotional development of the child. These program goals reflect, in more detail, the philosophy of operating this program.

The first goal is to provide comprehensive educational and therapeutic services for all of our children. This is a highly individualized program to effect positive behavioral changes in five major areas: socialization and emotional, daily living skills, motor development, language and cognitive development and perceptual abilities. For an effective educational program teachers of exceptional children must be dedicated to the belief that all children can learn regardless of their level of development. Each child is viewed, accepted, and taught as a unique individual and each gain whether large or small is worthy of their teaching efforts.

The second goal is to provide a program of education and involvement for the families of the children. We feel that parents are essential members of an intervention program and must be included in planning and in developing and delivering needed intervention strategies for their child. Our program places considerable emphasis on the role of the parent in influencing the child's environment and adjustments necessary for the handicapped child. Cooperation and involvement by parents are crucial and necessary to the success of our preschool program.

Our third goal is to coordinate services in the community for the children and their parents. We believe that the child should be served as a total person. Progress can only be made if he is functioning as a well being. We accept as our responsiblity to notify and to bring to the parents the services that are available to them.

Our fourth goal is a commitment to the Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped to establish our program as a demonstration model for the community, state, and nation. Therefore, we are trainers of teachers, host and hostesses to visitors, and disseminators of information. We are to share information to the public in order to assist others in establishing similar programs

and to assist individuals and groups in being knowledgeable teachers.

It is our belief that no single individual can fulfill the goals or any one goal of our program but only by working as a cohesive team can we provide a quality educational program for our children.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the AISD Early Childhood Program for exceptional children is to provide an educational program for three, four, and five year old handicapped children, aimed toward preparation for placement in special education classes, the regular school program, or other public school programs within the school district.

Rationale

Early education for exceptional children is based upon the premise that mediation of disabilities early in a child's life will increase the child's opportunities for a more successful life and lessen the damaging effects on development. This does not imply that the disability will be removed and that it will not effect development but that the effects of a handicapping condition may be minimized in the formative years of life so that it does not occupy a dominant position in how the child develops.

Eligibility

Exceptional children who are 3,4, or 5 years of age and live in the Austin Independent School District are eligible for the program. The eligible handicaps as determined by Texas Education Agency are as follows:

Physically Handicapped

- Visually Handicapped
- Auditorially Handicapped
- Minimally Brain-Injured
- Orthopedically Handicapped or other health impaired

Mentally Retarded

- Educable Mentally Retarded
- Trainable Mentally Retarded

Emotionally Disturbed

Language and/or Learning Disabilities

Speech Handicapped

Multi-Handicapped

- Physically handicapped - Mentally retarded (usually these children are served at the AISD Developmental Center at St. Johns School)
- Other multi-handicapped

PERSONNEL:

The main groups of people to be working with the children:

Teacher/Teachers of the class - - trained in Early Childhood Special Education

Teacher Aides - - paid employees to work as assistant teachers in the classroom.

Therapists:

Occupational - Fine and Gross Motor Training

Speech - Speech and Language Development

Physical - Stretching tightness, strengthening weakness, gait training with orthopedic appliances.

Graduate Trainees - - registered at the University of Texas at Austin for Masters or Postmasters work.

Volunteers - - interested people who are willing to devote time to the early education of children with handicaps.

Parents

REFERRALS:

Referrals to the program may be made directly to the Early Childhood office at Casis. Referrals may come from a variety of sources; parents, AISD, community agencies and programs, other preschool programs, doctors and other professionals, and others.

LOCATION:

Casis Elementary School 2710 Exposition Blvd. Austin, Texas 78703	Dill Elementary 2007 McCall Road Austin, Texas

PHONE NUMBER:

474-6461	472-7302

ADMISSION:

Admittance to and maintenance in the Early Childhood program shall be on a trial basis.

A six weeks review of the appropriateness of each child's continued assignment to special education services as evidenced by progress or lack of it shall be made by the staff. The parents have the right to withdraw their child at any time during this trial period.

STARTING DATE:

August 25, 1975

TIME:

Children will attend five days a week - - Monday through Friday. Hours will be from:

8:30 AM - 1:00 PM

The teachers are on duty until 3:45 PM.

CALENDAR:

The Early Childhood Program will follow the regular calendar of the Austin Independent School District.

LUNCH:

At approximately 10:30 lunch will be served to your child at school.

Your child may buy his lunch by the day (50¢) or bring his lunch and buy milk (5¢). A weekly ticket may be purchased on Monday for $2.50. Free lunches are available for those families meeting the income criteria.

Please place the money in an envelope, seal it and pin it to your child. Checks made out to the school may be sent. Do not send checks to Dill Elementary, please.

Please check the paper for the weekly menu.

HEALTH POLICY:

The child should be free of fever, diarrhea, vomiting, colds, impetigo, head lice, ringworm, or any communicable disease. Please do not send your child if he has any of the above and it is a good idea to keep him home an extra day.

The child should have had a physical examination before entering the class.

His immunizations should be up to date.

A telephone number must be on file at all times where you may be reached in case your child becomes ill during the school day.

Please call school (474-6461) after 8:00 if your child is ill or will not be attending school for any reason. Call transportation (452-0259) before 7:00.

MEDICATION:

A consent form filled out by both the parents and physician must be on file before medication can be administered at school. Please do not send medication on the bus.

BUS:

School buses with driver's aides will be provided to transport children to and from school. The buses will be scheduled according to the admittance and dismissal time of the children. The Mini-buses are equipped with some seat belts. Buses will start start running August 25, 1975.

CLOTHING:

The child should wear comfortable , washable play clothes that encourage self-help skills. Example: Boxer shorts, and fastenings they can manipulate.

A change of clothing should be brought and left at school clearly marked with the child's name in case of accidental soiling.

When clothing is sent home, please send a clean change to school in a bag well marked.

If the child is not toilet trained, leave extra underpants or disposable diapers.

TESTS:

In order to prescribe an individualized program for your child as much information as possible will be collected through observation and checklists. In addition, selected tests will be used to diagnose and evaluate the progress of the child and the overall program. These tests will be administered by the staff in the school setting. The results of the evaluation will be shared with the parents in a regularly scheduled conference.

FIELD TRIPS:

Field trips are taken as a supplement to the unit of study. Parents are informed of these trips before they are taken and sometimes will be asked to accompany the class. A signed permission must be received from the parents for each trip taken in a car or when walked.

PARKING:

When visiting school please park on the south side of Casis School on Hillview Road. You may park in the circular drive when bringing your child or picking him up, otherwise please use Hillview.

PARENTS:

Parents are welcomed to visit their child's class.
If interested in working in the class, this can be arranged by contacting the Parent Coordinator.
If you bring your child please do not drop him/her off and leave. Take him to his room. It is important that children be brought to school by 8:30 and picked up at the appointed hour. Arrangements cannot be made to keep children before 8:30 or after 1:00.
Two conferences will be held - one in the fall and one in the spring or summer. However, parents are encouraged to ask for a conference at any time he/she feels it is needed.
Group meetings of all of the parents and small group discussions will be held on a regular basis both during the day and at night. Notice of the meetings will be sent home.
The parent meetings and program are planned to meet the needs of the parents. A Needs Form will be sent home for each parent to fill out to help determine the topics for the meetings.
All families can expect a home visit by the teachers or someone on staff.
Ethel Kutac will be contacting you about the parent involvement program. She is available to talk to parents at any time.

Austin Independent School District
Early Childhood Special Education
Casis Elementary School
2710 Exposition Blvd.
Austin, TX 78705

CONFIDENTIAL

Date _____

Name _____

Child's Name _____

Parent Needs Form

Directions:

On the 1 - 5 scale below each item, circle the number that indicates your need for training --- 1 being the lowest need, 5 being the highest need. After you have circled one of the numbers read the statements that follow and check the ones that will best meet the need for you.

I need the opportunity to talk about my feelings with someone who understands my child's problem.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ I need to talk to the teacher/parent coordinator

____ in my home _____on the phone ____at school.

____ I need to be referred for counseling elsewhere.

____ I need to read articles/books about my child's problem.

I would like to get together with other families who have children with problems.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ I would like to be in a discussion group

____ I would like social gatherings (picnics, pot luck,etc.)

____ I would like to meet parents informally.

____ I would like notification of organizations and meetings of interest in community.

I would like to learn more about my child's problem.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ By using the parent library.

____ By observing teachers/ therapists working with my child.

____ By attending parent/teacher conferences.

____ By joining a discussion group of parents who have a similar child.

I would like to learn about how children develop and learn.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ By using the parent library.

____ By observing teachers/ therapists working with my child.

____ By attending films/meetings on Child Development.

____ By attending night meeting when specialists are on the program.

I would like to understand changes that take place in my child.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ By learning how to observe children.

____ By helping in my child's class on a regular basis.

____ By attending parent/teacher conferences.

____ By receiving home training activities.

I would like to improve my skills in managing behavior problems.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ By receiving behavior management training.

____ By using the parent library.

____ By receiving individual management training at home.

____ By hearing specialists on the subject.

I would like to work with the teachers of my child so that I am using the same methods and techniques at home as are being used in school.

1 2 3 4 5
Low Need High Need

____ By observing my child.

____ By attending training in observation skills.

____ By helping in my child's classroom.

____ By receiving home training activities.

____ By being informed of my child's program by notes, phone calls, newsletter.

NOTE: The above information is confidential. It will be used strictly for planning the parent program.

List below any other needs that you have concerning your child and the Early Childhood program.

_____

_____

_____

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Early Childhood Special Education
Casis Elementary
474-6461

PARENT PARTICIPATION INFORMATION FORM:

Name: Father: _____

Mother: _____

Child: _____

Home Address: _____

_____

Occupation:

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Telephone:

Home: _____

Father at work: _____

Mother at work: _____

Interest in Parent Participation: Place "M" for mother, "F" for father.

Very interested: _____

Not interested: _____

Moderately interested: _____

Please complete the form on the other sheet.

Mark "M" for Mother, "F" for Father

Are you able to help with the following?

____ Sewing

____ Carpentry

____ Driving for field trips

____ Teaching art

____ Cooking

____ Music

____ Dramatics

____ Provide Holiday Snacks

____ Care for pet over holidays

____ Therapists

____ Parent Library

____ Room Parents

____ Physical Education

____ Volunteer in class

____ Story reading/telling

____ Play an instrument.

What? _____

____ Filing

____ Typing

____ Teacher Assistant

Have you had training in any other special area that might be helpful to the program? What area? _____

Do you have a place (farm, ranch,big yard, etc.) for a field trip?

_____Yes _____ No What? _____

Are you able to come to school to help with projects? ____ yes ____no

____Mornings ____ Afternoon ____ Night ____ Weekend

Will you be able to help with projects at home? ____ Yes ____No

Can you spend some time each week as a volunteer? ____ Yes ____No

How often could you come to school to help? _____

What would be the best time? _____

Is there any other way you can help? Please explain: _____

_____

Parent Plan

Name _____ Comments: _____

Child's Name _____ _____

Date _____ _____

_____

Long Term Objective:

_____

_____

Short Term Objectives:

1) _____

_____

2) _____

_____

3) _____

_____

Activities:

1) Date _____ _____

_____

2) Date _____ _____

_____

3) Date _____ _____

_____

Evaluation:

_____

_____

Parent Contact Form
Austin Independent School District
Early Childhood Special Education

Name _____

Child's Name _____

Date	Reason
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

_____ Contact

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Name of Contact: _____ By: _____

Reason for contact and who initiated contact: _____

_____

_____

Information gathered: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Follow-up needed: _____

_____

_____

_____

General tone of contact: _____

_____

_____

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

Initial Home Visit

Name of Child _____ Age _____

Date of visit _____ Race _____

With whom _____

By _____

Description of Child _____
(Physical Charcteristics)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Type of Handicap-Related Problems _____
(Toilet Training, Language, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

Condition of Home-Socio Economic Status _____

_____

Relationship of Family Members _____
(Those that are present at the time of the visit)

_____

_____

Other Information _____
(Transportation, Parent Program, Volunteer)

_____

_____

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

Home Visit

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____ By: _____

Reason for visit: _____

_____

Information gathered: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Follow-up needed: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tone of visit: _____

_____

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